

Maine Revised Statutes
Title 35-A: PUBLIC UTILITIES
Chapter 7: REGULATION AND CONTROL OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

§704. TERMINATION OF UTILITY SERVICES

The following provisions apply to termination of a customer's utility service. [1987, c. 141, Pt. A, §6 (NEW) .]

1. Residential customers. The commission shall adopt and promulgate reasonable rules after a hearing concerning the termination or disconnection of any residential customer's service by a transmission and distribution, gas, water or telephone utility of the State. These rules apply generally to all such utilities within the commission's jurisdiction and must provide for adequate written notice by that utility to the residential customer that the customer's utility bill has not been paid, and a notice of the prospective termination or disconnection and the right, prior to disconnection, to enter into reasonable installment payment arrangements with that utility; to settle any dispute concerning the proposed disconnection at an informal hearing with that utility and to appeal the results of that utility's decision to the commission. The rules must also provide that there may be no termination or disconnection during a limited medical emergency and for a just and reasonable procedure regarding reconnections of utility service and deposit requirements.

[1999, c. 398, Pt. A, §18 (AMD); 1999, c. 398, Pt. A, §§104, 105 (AFF) .]

1-A. Agreements with landlords. A transmission and distribution utility shall, upon request of a landlord, enter into an agreement with that landlord with respect to a residential rental property receiving transmission and distribution service in the name of that landlord's tenant to automatically transfer the service to the name of the landlord if the service would otherwise be disconnected. The transmission and distribution utility must notify the landlord within 72 hours of the transfer of the service to the landlord's name. Except upon the consent of the tenant, the transmission and distribution utility may not disclose to the landlord any personal or confidential information regarding the tenant or the tenant's account, except that a utility may disclose to the landlord that the service has been transferred to the landlord's name and any other information necessary to enable the utility to continue service to the premises.

The transmission and distribution utility may charge a reasonable fee for the costs associated with the transfer of the service to the landlord's name.

[2013, c. 250, §1 (NEW) .]

2. Nonresidential customers. Each public utility shall file with the commission schedules containing its terms and conditions applicable to termination of utility services to any nonresidential customer, which terms and conditions shall be subject to the commission's power under this Title. Every public utility shall comply with its terms and conditions. The commission shall adopt rules which provide a procedure for resolution by the commission or its delegate of disputes as to whether a proposed termination by a public utility is in compliance with its terms and conditions. A public utility may not terminate service to a nonresidential customer if the commission or its delegate rules within 7 days of receipt of the request for ruling that the proposed termination is not in compliance with the utility's terms and conditions. If the rules authorize a delegate to resolve disputes, the rule shall include a procedure for appeal of the decision to the commission.

[1987, c. 141, Pt. A, §6 (NEW) .]

3. Violation of rules.

[2003, c. 505, §15 (RP) .]

4. Property loss suffered by a customer. Upon a finding by the District Court of a property loss suffered by a customer causally related to a willful or reckless violation by a public utility of any substantive rule adopted by the commission pursuant to the authority granted in this section, the court may order the public utility to compensate the customer for the actual loss, less any setoff for a balance found to be due the utility by the customer for unpaid utility service. That loss may not include consequential damages. No action for damages resulting from a termination that was in willful or reckless violation of the commission's rules may be commenced until at least 60 days after notice of a claim setting forth the nature of the termination and the damages suffered has been provided to the utility. That notice must be provided to the utility in writing within 30 days of the termination.

[2003, c. 505, §16 (AMD) .]

5. Confidentiality of customer information. The following provisions apply to the confidentiality of customer information.

A. Records containing the following information are confidential and are not public records for the purpose of Title 1, section 402, subsection 3:

(1) Information acquired by the consumer assistance and safety division regarding the payment and credit history and financial condition of a customer who has requested the assistance of the division; and

(2) Information acquired by the consumer assistance and safety division regarding the medical condition of a customer or member of a customer's family. [2015, c. 8, §6 (AMD) .]

B. Notwithstanding paragraph A, any person, agency or public utility directly involved in the investigation of an individual customer matter shall be given access to the information which is pertinent to the complaint. [1987, c. 614, §2 (NEW) .]

C. Compilations of information in which the customer's identity is not disclosed are not confidential. [1987, c. 614, §2 (NEW) .]

D. The consumer assistance and safety division shall prepare its decisions or abstracts of decisions in a manner that protects the confidentiality of customer information as provided by this subsection. Those decisions or abstracts of decisions must be available for public access. [2015, c. 8, §6 (AMD) .]

[2015, c. 8, §6 (AMD) .]

SECTION HISTORY

1987, c. 141, §A6 (NEW). 1987, c. 614, §2 (AMD). 1999, c. 398, §A18 (AMD). 1999, c. 398, §§A104,105 (AFF). 1999, c. 547, §§B76,78 (AMD). 1999, c. 547, §B80 (AFF). 2003, c. 505, §§15,16 (AMD). 2013, c. 250, §1 (AMD). 2015, c. 8, §6 (AMD).

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